

# Uncle Sam and the Farmers---Secretary Wilson Discusses Some New Schemes of the Agricultural Department



THE NEW AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS AT WASHINGTON. The upper picture is a design of the department when completed. The lower is one of the two wings now in use.

BY FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Washington, D. C. Secretary Wilson is the mightiest of the slaves of Uncle Sam, the modern Aladdin. Our patriarchal uncle rubs the lamp and Mr. Wilson moves the world to do his bidding. He waves his wand over the deserts, and ten blades of grass spring up where none has grown before. He puts on his Fortunatus' cap and flies to the Atlas Mountains, bringing a buckwheat which adds billions of leaves to our national bread basket. He scours the earth for new nuts and fruits, and from China and Japan brings rice which yields a thousand fold on the lowlands of Louisiana, and Texas. He shakes his magic rod and the nitrogen of the air is harnessed to bacteria, which make Mother Earth produce as she has not produced before. He shows the farmers how to double their corn and the planters how to add millions to the value of their cotton. He is the friend of the helpful hen and the little red apple, and, in short, the mightiest of all those in the employ of our national ruler, Uncle Sam, Patriarch.

## Eighty Thousand Million Dollars.

I first met Secretary Wilson when he had just taken his seat as one of the members of President McKinley's Cabinet. That was fourteen years ago, and he has been working wonders ever since. He is a plain Scotch farmer, and he deals in sums that would stagger a Morgan or a Guggenheim. During the past ten years the proceeds of our farms have been more than eighty billion dollars. Eighty thousand millions! It means to give four thousand dollars to every family of eight hundred dollars to every man, woman and child in the whole United States. That sum has come out of the farms within ten years and yearly the product increases. When the present secretary took charge of the Department of Agriculture it amounted to about four billion dollars. In 1910 it was almost nine billions, and when the present schemes of farm improvement and new crops have been generally adopted we shall be rich enough to buy Mexico and Canada and to inaugurate peace movements throughout the world.

Eighty thousand million dollars! The sum is beyond human conception. It is ten millions more than all the wealth of Great Britain and Ireland. It is more than twice the value of all Russia owns, four times the total wealth of Austria-Hungary, and over fifteen times that of Holland or Spain.

## One Year's Farm Crop.

Coming down to the crops of a single year, Secretary Wilson tells me that during 1910 our farmers yanked all most nine billion dollars out of Mother Earth's pockets. That sum would come within 10 per cent. of the gov-



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ernment revenues of every country on earth, and it would pay nine-tenths of all the salaries of those governments, including their armies and navies and every other employee, from the Kluge who sits on the thrones to the women who scrub the palaces and public offices. Nine thousand millions of money a year means just about thirty millions for every working day. It means more than a million dollars for every hour, twenty thousand dollars for every minute and over three hundred and thirty-three dollars for every second. Take out your watch and look at its face. Follow the second hand as it measures the minutes. Every time it goes around its little dial our farmers are adding \$30,000 to our national wealth. Now put it to your ear and listen to the ticking. Every tick means more than three hundred dollars, and that three hundred is added with every tick, day and night, week in and week out, all the year through. It is the man who has had much to do with making this wealth that you talk with to-day. I am merely the phonograph, and through me the Secretary of Agriculture is speaking to you. We are sitting in Mr. Wilson's office and the secretary is talking of Uncle Sam, Patriarch.

## Ten Years With the Farmers.

Says he:

"It is the duty of the government to take care of the citizen, and it should study his comfort in every possible way. It should show him how to husband his wealth, and to develop his property for himself and the nation. These are some of the things we



WE WERE SITTING IN SECRETARY WILSON'S OFFICE.

are trying to do, and I might also say some of these we are doing."

"Can you give me an idea of your work for the farmers?"

"We are not working for the farmers alone," was the reply. "This department is for all the people. It affects every man, woman and child in the country, and its sphere is increasing each year. We are now spending about \$15,000,000 per annum, and the whole of this is used for investigations and operations which tend to the increase of our national and individual wealth. We have more than 12,000 employees, and we have trebled our force within the past ten years."

"Can you tell me some of the things you are doing, Mr. Secretary?"

"I could mention a hundred, and the work of each would give you the material for a very good letter. You will have to visit the bureau, and I will see that everything is thrown open to you. This is a great experimental station, consisting of an army of practical scientists who are working along all sorts of lines. If you want to know about aerial navigation I will turn you over to Professor Moore, and he will tell you the result of the latest investigations of the upper air. If you would know about our forests I can send you to the chief of that service. He has 3,000 men under him, and he takes care of 190,000,000 acres of woods. "Would you know about cooking?" We have chemists who are studying foods and who will put you in a glass case and feed you there, telling you just how much of each bite goes to make muscle and how much is pure waste."

"I have recently tested the matter of cheese. I have always had the idea that green cheese is not good for the stomach and that old and sharp cheese is better. We fed a man upon the different kinds and tested it, and we now know which is right."

## Fighting the Bugs.

"Are you interested in bugs? We have a department devoted to them which is studying all sorts of insects for the good of the people. With other things it is working on the gypsy moth and the brownish moth, which are now ravaging the trees of a large part of New England. These moths were brought in from abroad by a scientist for the purpose of study. He allowed a pair or so to get loose, and the result is they have multiplied by millions and are destroying the trees over an area of 10,000 square miles. We heard that there were parasites which would exterminate this pest, and Dr. L. O. Howard, the chief of the bureau of entomology, has been sent to Europe three times to find them. One of his trips was to the Crimea, and it was there he discovered the moth's great enemy. He has imported it. Congress has given us an appropriation to wipe out that pest."

"Another interesting investigation," continued Secretary Wilson, relates to the fever tick which has ruined the cattle in parts of the south to the extent of something like forty million dollars a year. We looked everywhere to get something to fight it, but failed. At last we discovered that the tick bred on the ground and that the young fastened themselves to the plants and crawling up were able to get on such cattle as fed in the pastures. We found that they had to reach the cattle very soon or they died."

With this knowledge we got the farmers to divide their fields in the middle and put the stock on one side. In a short time the ticks died of starvation. We now had all the cattle dipped in a bath which destroyed the ticks on them, and moved them across to the other side of the field. Within a few days all the ticks in the now vacant pasture had died the same way, and that land was clear. By these means we have already driven this pest out of between ninety and one hundred million acres of pasture lands. The total area is about 145,000 square miles. It is equal to three and one-half States the size of Ohio."

"Teaching the Boys to Farm."

"Tell me something about the work you are doing for the farmers' boys, Mr. Secretary," I said.

"That is a big story," replied Mr. Wilson. "With the assistance of the States we are establishing schools for the teaching of farming, and improved agriculture is being taught in the public schools. We are also doing a great

This boy, being refused a horse by his father, cultivated his acre with a goat and made fifty bushels.

ble, treble and in some cases even five or six times that which was gotten before.

## Corn Versus Cotton.

"That was some years ago," continued the secretary. "It was before the boll weevil had begun to bite deep into the cotton crop of the South. As you know, cotton has long been the one crop of that section. The planters have raised almost nothing else. They have imported their hogs and their poultry, have bought mules and other live stock of the North and have even brought in the stuff to feed them. We wanted to make the South self-supporting, to diversify the crops and to show what corn would do for the land. This has been accomplished through the boys. We shall soon have 100,000 boy farmers who will each have an acre or more to cultivate after our methods. We had more than 40,000 last year, and we have already doubled that number. We have thousands of Southern farmers who are experimenting with corn and thousands who are already raising it for the money they can make from the crop. As a result of a few years' work we have increased the corn there until the South is now producing one-third of all raised in the Union, and its position there were about \$300 separate exhibits of corn raised in the older corn region by as many thousand individual boys. These boys had each one acre of land, which he planted and cultivated after rules laid down by this department. Prizes were given in each district to the boy who produced the most and best corn, and the results were a yield which was doubtless a record."

## Stories of Boy Farmers.

"Tell me more about the boys, Mr. Secretary."

"I could talk all day about that," replied the gray-haired chief of the Agricultural Department. "We had eleven of the little fellows here last fall. We gave them diplomas and a free trip to Washington as competitive prizes for raising the most and best corn on one acre. They took land in States that have been producing on the average from fifteen to twenty bushels per acre and farmed it. They worked under our direction, and the result is they have raised up to as high as 235 bushels per acre, and one of them has produced 119 bushels on an acre at a cost of 8 cents a bushel. We have thousands of boys who have harvested from one acre they farmed double as much as their fathers grew on any acre adjoining, and some who have produced five times as much."

## The Meaneast Map in the South.

"Take for instance, the case of one bright Southern boy," the secretary of Agriculture continued. His father had no faith in what he called corn farming, and, besides, he was about as mean as they make them. His boy had asked for the use of an acre, and the father refused, telling him he would not have anything to do with such foolishness. The boy persisted, however, and the father finally pointed to a rough hillside overgrown with brush and spotted with stumps and stones, and told him if he would grub that acre and move off the stones he could have it. The boy went to work, and finally cleared it. Then the old man said: "That acre is too good for me to lose. I think I will plant it myself." The boy cried, and the father finally said: "Well, if you will clear another acre beside that I won't take it from you, and you may plant it and do what you please." Thereupon the boy again went to work and cleared the second acre. He planted it to corn after our directions, and as a result he made eighty-eight bushels. At the same time his father planted and cultivated the acre adjoining, using the old way. He made just eighteen. Since then the old man has been converted to our way of farming. He goes with his boy to the agricultural fairs and tells about the eighty-eight bushels of corn they raised on an acre, saying: "That is what me and my boy done."

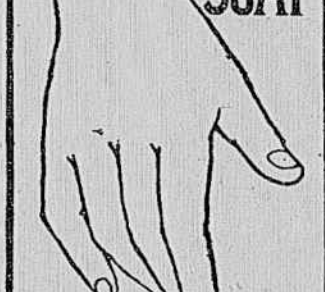
## Farming With Goats.

"In another instance," continued the secretary, "an Arkansas farmer would not give his boy a horse to cultivate his acre. The boy paid to have the land plowed, and after that he did all his cultivating with a common, everyday goat. Notwithstanding that he raised fifty bushels of corn. Another boy had not even a goat and he harnessed the calves, and made seventy-five bushels of corn to the acre. The department is full of such stories."

## That is the kind of work that makes men, Mr. Secretary," said I.

"That is what I told the boys who won the prize trips to Washington. The corn club of the South are making men, and the boys who belong to it are among the best men of the future. When a boy learns how to manage an acre and to count every cent that goes in and all that comes out, as well as to make it produce, as those boys are doing, he comes mighty near to learning how to manage a farm. He learns how to work and how to save. He looks rather tired, but he is down to Washington. Every one of them appreciated the value of the cent and the dime. One had been given \$150 to pay his expenses to the capital and back, and he was to have all that was left. He came from beyond the Mississippi River. When he reached here he looked rather tired. One of our men asked him what kind of a trip he had had and whether he had slept well on the cars. He replied: 'Not very well.' And upon further questioning said that he had sat up all the way. Said he: 'A sleeping car would have cost me \$5, and that is a

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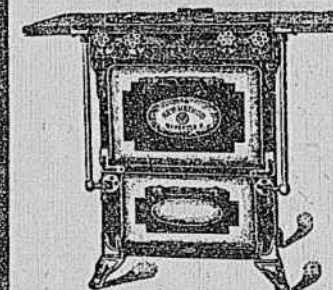
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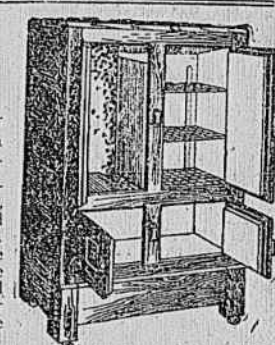
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lot of money to me." He was asked as to his meals, and he said he had gone into the diner, but that they wanted to charge him a dollar for dinner, and so he waited until he got to Memphis, and there got some apples, popcorn and bread, and that was enough until he reached Washington. Another boy went to Pittsburg, and in the restaurant at the depot was asked to pay 10 cents for a cup of coffee. He was horrified, and that is the last coffee he drank during the trip.

Joe Stone of Georgia, who is only twelve years of age, had to pay one-third of his crop to the landlord of whom his father rented the farm. He raised 102 bushels at a cost of 29 cents. Another boy named Henry, who came from Louisiana, raised almost 140 bushels at a cost of 13 cents, and he sold his crop at \$3 a bushel for seed. That boy has put in five acres this year, and he expects to get 500 bushels of corn from them. He is going to the high school, and the thousand dollars he thinks this year's crop will net him is to be used to pay for his college education.

**Successful Ira and President Taft.** "Speaking of the making men of the boys," continued the secretary, "I can think of nothing more educational. This work develops their self-reliance and encourages them to think and act for themselves. Take another of the prize winners, little Ira Smith of Arkansas. He was so bashful when the demonstrator of the Agricultural Department visited his father that he would not speak to him. He could not be persuaded to talk and ran out of the house. Nevertheless the boy, after having raised 119 bushels on his acre at a cost of 8 cents a bushel, talked with President Taft here at Washington and was not afraid. When the

boys called at the White House the President tackled Ira Smith first, saying: "Now tell me the truth, my boy, didn't you pick out the best acre on your father's place for that corn?" "No," replied little Ira. "My acre was just like the rest." "And do you expect to try it again," said the President? "Yes, I do. I have already selected my acre and I hope to raise more corn next year than I raised this."

"But it is not the effect that the work has on the boys alone that should be considered," said the secretary. "Every one of the thousands of boys who are working that way represents a family and its neighbors, and in this movement we are educating whole communities and whole States. We are revolutionizing the work of the farmer of the South, and the changes now going on will make that section one of the richest and most stable parts of the country. The South is just at the edge of its beginning and its growth in wealth from now on will be surprising to all the other parts of the Union."

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